



DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

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MOST REVEREND W. FRANCIS MALOOLY, DD
BISHOP OF WILMINGTON

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Documents released recently by the Diocese of Wilmington have once again brought to public attention the past criminal misconduct of some clergy and the mistakes made by Bishops in handling these crimes. In coverage of the documents, the media has also reported that certain clergy sexual abuse survivor advocates have called for the resignations of Monsignors Cini, Lemon and Rebman for being what they termed "architects" of a diocesan "concealment strategy" regarding sexual abuse.

None of these three dedicated priests ever engineered a strategy to conceal priest sex abuse. None of these men have ever put children at risk by placing an abusive priest back in ministry nor would they ever have had the authority to do so. What the documents show is that in 1985, within months of Bishop Robert E. Mulvee's arrival as Bishop of Wilmington, two families reported to the Diocese that their teenage sons had been abused by a diocesan priest. Bishop Mulvee determined that the Diocese had an obligation to report the abuse to civil authorities and the abuse was reported. Following this incident, the Diocese, under the leadership of Bishop Mulvee, developed a diocesan reporting policy. A Policy on Child Abuse and Neglect was adopted in November 1985, making the Diocese of Wilmington one of the first dioceses to implement a mandatory abuse reporting policy.

Bishop Mulvee implemented a "zero tolerance" approach to clerical sex abuse matters in the mid-1980's, more than 15 years before this standard was promulgated nationally in the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Monsignors Cini, Lemon and Rebman implemented this approach, and in no case handled by them was an abusive priest ever returned to ministry by the Bishop. In part because of this approach, there have been no reported incidents of abuse by a diocesan priest in ministry in more than 20 years. In saying this I do not overlook the tragic abuse by Francis DeLuca of a family member after his removal from ministry, during his retirement in Syracuse, New York. Additionally, our diocese annually has been found compliant with the Charter since it was adopted nearly a decade ago.

There is no doubt that Bishops have made mistakes in the past. For example, although a "zero tolerance" policy was implemented in this Diocese more than 25 years ago, the Bishop did not begin to publicize the removal of abusive priests from ministry until 2002. This was common practice at the time, but there is no doubt that survivors and their families, and the Church, would have been better served if abusers had been publicly identified. Monsignors Cini, Rebman and Lemon are all pastors of busy parishes. In addition to their parish ministry, they have taken on diocesan administrative positions and have served honorably in those jobs for many years. These men love God, the Church and the people of our diocese, and they take very seriously the work of protecting children. They have my complete support and gratitude.

I repeat the pledge I made at my Mass of Installation on September 8, 2008 to continue my work to bring healing and reconciliation to survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Sincerely in Our Lord,

Most Reverend W. Francis Malooly
Bishop of Wilmington

February 24, 2012

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